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OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "L", 31ST INFANTRY REGIMENT (PHILIPPINE DIVISION)
IN THE BATTLE OF LAYAC JUNCTION, BATAAN, P. I., 6-7 JANUARY 1942
(PHILIPPINE ISLAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: COMPANY IN THE COUNTERATTACK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Organization of Covering Force at Layac Junction.....	5
General Situation.....	6
Enemy Action.....	9
Restoring the Main Battle Line.....	10
Withdrawal and Reorganization.....	14
Analysis and Criticism.....	16
Lessons.....	19
Map A - Orientation Sketch, Luzon, Philippine Islands	
Map B - Philippine Campaign Dispositions	
Map C - Layac Junction Defense Positions	
Map D - Layac Junction - "L" Company Counterattack	
Chart I - QM Memo to 31st Inf. G. O., 24 March 1942	

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of "L" Company, 31st Infantry Regiment (US), Philippine Division in the battle of Layac Junction, Bataan, Philippine Islands, 6-7 January 1942.* It will be necessary, however, to refer the reader back for a moment to the 24th of December 1941. It was on this date that General of the Army ~~Mac~~ MacArthur ordered the War Plan Orange #3 which had first been formulated by the Philippine Department in concurrence with the War Department in 1926 to be put into effect on M-Day. (1) It is the author's opinion that until this date the Commanding General, USAFFE, firmly believed the Philippine Commonwealth Defense Plan would be successful.

It is then necessary, the author believes, to briefly explain the geographical and topographical structure of the main island of the Philippine Archipelago, Luzon, in order that the reader may more fully understand the importance of, and the reason for the action near Layac Junction, Bataan, Philippine Islands on 6-7 January 1942.

A study of Map "A" will readily show why the Philippines have always been regarded as hardly defensible. "The heart of the Archipelago is Manila. It is approachable from almost any direction and the defenders cannot go far from their base to meet one enemy column without exposing their flanks to others approaching on all sides. The Bataan Peninsula of Luzon is the only terrain offering defense lines which have to be met head-on and cannot be flanked from the sea at numerous points. But yet,

* All dates referred to in this monograph are one day ahead of the U.S. for the Philippine Islands are west of the 180° meridian.

(1) Col. Romulo states in his book, page 90, the W.P.O. #3 was put into effect 29 December 1941. However, Maj. John I. Pray and Maj. Wm. Neelson state 24 December 1941. The author agrees with 24 December 1941.

Bataan is a wild, jungle country. An Army cannot live there all the time. Nor can any Army do much out of Bataan except sit there and block Manila Bay." (2)

"MacArthur's problem was to scout out in all directions on Luzon to locate the main line of enemy approach, halt the most dangerous, and toy with the feinting, while collecting his own forces for a curving retreat around the head of Manila Bay to the peninsula (Bataan)".(3)

The Japanese strategy for invading the islands was composed of two phases. The first was to destroy the American and Filipino air forces. This was accomplished almost from the outset of hostilities. Most of the air power was destroyed on 8-10 December 1941, when the enemy air forces bombed Clark and Nichols Fields--the two main air fields on Luzon. The second, or landing operations, began on 10 December 1941. The Japanese had successfully landed troops at Appari and Vigan by this date on the extreme north and northwest coasts of Luzon. (See Map A) Little American resistance was offered since there were few troops in northern Luzon which is separated from the south by high mountains.

On 22 December 1941 a force of about 80 transports entered Lingayan Gulf (See Map A) successfully landing troops at many points. The American Air Force having been destroyed, the Japanese had an almost "free" entry into the Bay. However, it is with the greatest of esteem that it be here mentioned that the 26th Cavalry (PS) carried on a heroic, but overwhelmingly losing battle against enemy naval and air gun fire. On 23 December 1941, another landing by the enemy was made at ^{ANTIMUNAN} ~~Atimonan~~ (See Map A) on Lamon Bay which is the narrowest part of Luzon, southeast of Manila. Crossing the isthmus at ^{ANTIMUNAN} ~~Atimonan~~, the Japanese cut off the southern part of Luzon and then advanced north upon Manila. (4)

(2) A-3, p. 349; (3) A-3, p. 350; (4) A-3, p. 351

"Pressure on American forces from north and south became so great that it became impossible to hold two fronts. It is probable that 200,000 to 300,000 seasoned Japanese troops from China and Hainan, including a tank division, were employed in the invasion. The southern forces (American) therefore on 1-2 January withdrew north to join the forces in Taupanga, Pampanga Province, uncovering Manila and permitting occupation of that city. Continued strong pressure forced a withdrawal into the Bataan Peninsula." (5)

In the War Plan Orange #3 preparation, all of these afore-mentioned landings had been accepted as positive vulnerable points in the event of hostilities, and the final plan drawn was to withdraw into the Bataan Peninsula. (6)

Orders having been issued to all Field Commanders by the Commanding General, USAFFE, on 24 December 1941 for immediate adoption of War Plan Orange #3, there was a continual flow of troops from northern and southern Luzon into Bataan. There was only one road accessible for this troop movement. Layac Junction was a vital point on this road because of the bridge crossing the Culo River which separates the northern end of Bataan from Luzon. If this bridge fell to the Japanese before the withdrawing of the Northern and Southern Luzon forces was completed, Bataan could not be defended. (7) If Bataan was not defended, Corregidor, the citadel denying the Japanese access to Manila Bay, would of necessity fall of its own weight. (This fact was proved by history.)

ORGANIZATION OF COVERING FORCE AT LAYAC JUNCTION

On 29 December 1941, the 31st Infantry Regiment was deployed along the zigzag trail on the Dinalupihan-Olongapo road with the mission of holding the road against a Japanese landing in Subic Bay until the with-

(5) A-3, p. 351; (6-7) Personal Knowledge

drawal into Bataan was completed; then to blow up the zigzag trail and bridges and retire into Bataan. (See Map B) On 2 January 1942 USAFFE ordered the Commanding General, North Luzon Force, to organize a covering force at Layac Junction and upon completion of the organization to turn the command of the covering force over to General Parker. The troops allotted for this mission were the 71st Division (PA); the 31st Infantry (US); the 26th Cavalry (PS); the 1st Battalion, 88th Field Artillery (PS); and the 1st Battalion, 23rd Field Artillery (PS). Brig. Gen. C. A. Selleck was placed in direct command of this force. (8) On 4 January 1942, at about 18:00, the 31st Infantry Regiment (US) was ordered to blow the "zigzag" on the Dinalupihan-Olongapo road and move to a delaying position at Layac Junction. The actual demolition work was prepared and blown by the 14th Engineer Regiment (PS). This move was completed by about 21:00 hours. (9) The Regiment was assigned to a sector about 1000 yards south of the Layac Junction bridge and approximately 500 yards west of the east, or main, road. A night reconnaissance was made for positions while the men went into bivouac to get much needed sleep.

GENERAL SITUATION

Early on the morning of 5 January 1942, work was begun on preparing positions in the assigned Regimental sector. The covering force dispositions were as follows: (See Map C) "The 71st Infantry Division (PA) occupied the south bank of the Culi River from Almacén to a point just northeast of Culi. The 72nd Infantry (PA) was in the position previously prepared by the 31st Infantry (US). This prepared position was astride the east road just north of Culi, about 1000 yards south of the Layac Junction bridge. It extended about 400 yards south of the east road. The 1st and 2nd Battalions extended the line to the southwest. The dispositions set

(8) A-1, p. 24; (9) Personal Knowledge

forth above left a wide gap between the left of the 31st Infantry (US) and the nearest hill mass about 3000 yards away. The 26th Cavalry (PS) was assigned to cover this gap and protect the left (west) flank of the covering force. The 1st Battalion, 23rd Field Artillery (PS) and 1st Battalion, 88th Field Artillery (PS) from positions west of the east road supported the 31st Infantry (US). The remnants of the 71st Field Artillery (PA) supported the 71st Division (PA).

"The 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry (US) was held in reserve about a thousand yards [?]southwest of Culis." (10) (As the author remembers it, the 3rd Battalion reserve position was nearer 1500 yards [?]southwest of Culis.)

The main battle line position was about a thousand yards southwest of the Layac Junction bridge extending along the south banks of the Culo River. The Regimental CP was some 1000 to 1500 yards in rear of the main battle line. The 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry, went into position on the right, 2nd Battalion on the left of the Regimental sector, and the 3rd Battalion in reserve. (The 3rd Battalion CP was about 700 yards in rear of the front line) (See Map C) The position generally lent itself to a good defense. It was on high, rolling ground which sloped toward the river valley and afforded good fields of fire.

On 5 January 1942 "L" Company prepared its reserve position approximately 200 yards forward from the 3rd Battalion CP and dug-in--each man preparing fox holes on the reverse slope of the rolling hills. (See Map C) At this time "L" Company had a composite strength of one officer and 93 enlisted men. The Company was organized into a company headquarters section, three rifle platoons of three squads each, and a weapons section. Each squad consisted of six to eight men and a Corporal, squad leader. The weapons section consisted of eight men and a staff sergeant, section leader. There were two light machine guns and two Browning automatic rifles in the Company. (The Company had three 60-mm mortars prior to the outbreak of hostilities;

however, on 9 December 1941 these mortars had been turned in to Ordinance because it was found there was not a round of 60-mm mortar ammunition in the Islands.) All riflemen were armed with the Garand M-1 rifle, but there was a very limited supply of ammunition clips necessitating individual riflemen when firing to fire a clip and reload same before firing again.

The only means of communication within the Battalion was by runner. However, the Battalion Commander had one SCR, 131 radio, (11) and field telephone communications with Regiment. His CP was approximately 200 yards in rear of "L" Company's reserve position. (12) *Repetition*

The Company Commander, his 1st Sergeant, his three rifle platoon leaders and weapons sections sergeant made an extensive reconnaissance on the afternoon of 5 January 1942 for likely routes of approach from their reserve position to the main battle line. The Company Commander and his party visited and inspected the battle line positions of "B" and "C" Companies of the 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry (US). Upon returning to his CP, he learned that approximately 60,000 rounds of small arms ammunition had been dumped in his Company area. Upon seeing this great amount of ammunition in his Company sector, he went to the 3rd Battalion CP and inquired of the Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Jasper E. Brady, concerning this ammunition. The Battalion Commander apparently did not know why the ammunition had been dumped, nor who had ordered it dumped. The Company Commander did learn, however, that each Company in the Regiment had received a like amount of ammunition. (13)

During the night of 5-6 January 1942, the 26th Cavalry (PS) was noted moving) along the road approximately a thousand yards south of the Layac Junction bridge running generally west and parallel to the main battle position. (See Map C) It was further noted that the Cavalry was composed of horse and motorized squadrons. It was at this time the Company Commander learned the proposed disposition and mission for this unit--that of covering the left (west) flank of the 31st Infantry Regiment. (See Map C) This information was received with great zest by the members of the whole command for it had been assumed, from rumors, that the 26th Cavalry (PS) had been

(11) A-2, p. 54; (12-13) Personal Knowledge

completely annihilated in their actions against the Japanese landings at Lingayan Gulf almost a month earlier. (See Map A) (14)

ENEMY ACTION

At dawn, or about 0500, 6 January 1942, the Japanese Infantry was observed moving into positions along the north banks of the Culo River. About 1030 their artillery was seen going into position in the vicinity of the village of Saba. This artillery was almost immediately taken under fire by our own artillery Battalions. All during the morning more Japanese artillery, including 105-mm Howitzers, moved up, went into action and pounded our front line positions, as well as severely punishing our artillery. (15) (See Map O) This artillery fire went on unabated for eight hours. It was estimated that there were artillery shells in the air at least every three minutes during this eight hour period. One officer, namely Maj. J. J. O'Donovan, said that "it was a greater concentration of artillery fire than during the Meuse-Argonne Campaign of 1917-18 wherein the Allied field artillery pieces were lined up 'hub-to-hub'." (16)

The covering force artillery was composed of Philippine Scout enlisted men commanded by American Army Officers. The Japanese had excellent artillery observation both on the ground and in the air. The Japanese observation planes were continuously flying unmolested over our positions causing our own artillery to change positions often. It was estimated that our artillery was outnumbered five to one. * (17) During the late afternoon, only one 75-mm gun of the 23rd Field Artillery Battalion (PS) was still in action. This one gun crew carried on the fight alone, being compelled to go into position, fire, and immediately withdraw to secondary positions to prevent being hit by Japanese artillery.

(14) Personal Knowledge; (15) A-1, p. 25; (16) Personal Knowledge

(17) A-1, p. 26

*Col. Brady states four to one. A-2, p. 3

The 88th Field Artillery Battalion (PS) was also in difficulty. The ammunition train had been hit and blown up. Their prime movers were disabled by artillery fire and heavy casualties inflicted on their personnel. After the Layac Junction action the 23rd Field Artillery Battalion (PS) ceased to exist as a fighting unit. (18)

RESTORING THE MAIN BATTLE LINE

About 1400, 6 January 1942, a runner from the 3rd Battalion CP located the Company Commander of "L" Company with a message to report immediately to the Battalion Commander. The Company Commander and his runner reported to the Battalion Commander. The Company Commander was told by Lt. Col. Jasper E. Brady that he had just received word, by telephone, from the Regimental Commander, Col. Charles L. Steele, that elements of "B" Company were routing to the rear through his CP and he concluded that there had been a Japanese penetration and break-through in our lines. "At 4:30 PM a heavy Infantry attack was launched against our position with the main blow falling near the junction of the 31st Infantry (US) and the 71st Infantry Division (PA). The 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry (US) were forced back causing a gap." (19) (See Map D)

At about this time the Company Commander of "I" Company (Capt. Ray Stroud) and "K" Company (Capt. Max K. Talbott), 31st Infantry (US) reported to the Battalion Commander. Col. Brady issued the following fragmentary order: "I" and "L" Companies will immediately move forward from their present positions into the front line sector formerly occupied by "B" Company. Report by runner to me as soon as you have your companies in position. "K" Company will remain in reserve prepared to move up into

(18) A-1, p. 26; (19) A-1, p. 26; (20) Personal Knowledge

the lines on my orders." (20) The Company Commanders immediately departed for their respective companies.

The Company Commander of "L" Company upon reaching his CP summoned his 1st Sgt., John P. Flynn, and platoon leaders. (All of the platoon leaders were non-commissioned officers.) The general situation as obtained from the Battalion Commander was reiterated to the platoon leaders. The Company Commander issued the following orders: "Sgt. (later 1st Lt.) Flynn, Rogers (Company Commander's runner) and I are going forward on a reconnaissance immediately. Move your platoons forward to the assembly area we picked yesterday. (See Map D) Pick up two extra bandoliers of ammunition per man. Any questions? -- Move out." (21) The Company Commander had designated an assembly point on his reconnaissance with his platoon leaders 5 January 1942 in anticipation of a displacement forward.)

The Company Commander, his runner, and 1st Sgt. moved out immediately on their reconnaissance. 1st Sgt. Flynn, a soldier with some fifteen-years' duty in the Philippines, could speak Tagalog* fluently. This fact being known by the Company Commander, he sent Sgt. Flynn to reconnoiter the right flank and attempt to contact elements of "A" Company, 72nd Infantry, 71st Division (PA). The Company Commander and his runner proceeded forward seeking covered routes of approach to the open "gap" in the lines. While on this reconnaissance the Company Commander saw and talked with the 2nd Battalion Executive Officer, Major J. J. O'Donovan, and learned from him the location of "C" Company's advanced CP. The Company Commander located Capt. Robert Carnahan, the Company Commander of "C" Company, and with him proceeded to the right flank of his sector.

There was heavy fighting going on in "C" Company's sector. The Japanese Infantry were crossing the Culo River to the east of "C" Company's right flank and in front of "A" Company, 72nd Infantry (PA). "L" Company Commander decided to put his Company into position on the right flank of

(20-21) Personal Knowledge

*Tagalog is one of the several native dialects of the Filipinos which was spoken by the soldiers of the 71st Division (PA)

"C" Company. On returning to the assembly area, "L" Company Commander located good covered approaches to his front line sector. Upon reaching the assembly area, he found that all platoon leaders had their platoons ready to move forward. (See Map D) However, he learned from 1st Sgt. (then Corp.) William E. McNulty that in the confusion of battle and heavy enemy artillery concentrations "I" Company had become disorganized; that the Company Commander had lost control and that "I" Company was practically in rout to the rear; that we could not depend on any support from them.

With this change in the situation, "L" Company Commander immediately formulated new plans for employment of his company. These new plans necessitated extending and spreading out his company across a much larger front. He designated the 1st Platoon with one squad of light machine guns to move out immediately with orders to establish contact with the extreme left elements of "A" Company, 72nd Infantry (PA) and to extend his platoon to the left along the main battle position. He showed the Platoon Leader, by pointing, the covered routes of approach along the dry stream bed which separated the boundary between "L" Company and "A" Company, 72nd Infantry (PA).

Shortly after this platoon moved out, under command of S/Sgt. (now 1st Lt.) William J. Gardner, 1st Sgt. Flynn returned from his reconnaissance and reported to the Company Commander. His report as the Company Commander remembers it was as follows: "I couldn't locate any officers in "A" Company (72nd Infantry, 71st Division, PA) but I did find many Filipino soldiers wandering around aimlessly. I talked to them and now have them back in their fox holes and carrying on the fight against the Japs crossing the river. I'd like to return to "A" Company (72nd Infantry, PA) for I can keep them firing. They have confidence now that they know American troops are going into position on their left flank." (22) (See Map D) This request was granted.

(22) Personal Knowledge

1st Sgt. Flynn had gathered approximately one over-strength company and had placed them on the right of what had been "B" Company's right flank (approximately). His recommendations were to commit the two remaining platoons and the remaining squad of the light machine guns into the front lines immediately. He had observed enemy infantry crossing the river opposite the 71st Division (PA) sector, moving generally toward the sector vacated by "B" Company, 31st Infantry (US). With this information, and with the arrival of approximately two squads of "I" Company under the command of Sgt. Bragga, whom the "L" Company Commander attached to his command, he assigned the front line sectors to his other two platoon leaders and ordered them to move up immediately. Sgt. Bragga and his men were to remain in the assembly area as "L" Company reserve.)

The platoons were preparing to move out when Major J. J. O'Donovan arrived at the assembly area. The Major informed the Company Commander that the Japanese had gotten a patrol of unknown strength across the river and were, at present, concentrated in the cane field. (See Map D) With this information the Company Commander changed his attack orders. The remainder of the company withdrew about 50 yards, fixed bayonets, and went into "platoons abreast" formation. The rifle platoons, supported by the remaining squad of light machine guns moved out toward the north east edge of the cane field. The 2nd platoon was on the left with orders that as soon as the platoon had cleared the cane field to reestablish the front line position to the right of "C" Company's right flank man. The 3rd platoon was on the right with orders that as soon as they had cleared the cane field they would reestablish the front line position between the 2nd platoon and the 1st platoon. The light machine gun squad was to displace forward upon word from the Company Commander.

When the first elements hit the open cane field it was taken under fire by the enemy. A heavy gun fight, with hand-to-hand fighting, lasted for

about 20 minutes with "L" Company advancing through the cane field and on into the battle line positions formerly occupied by "B" Company, 31st Infantry (US). The casualties for "L" Company amounted to one man slightly grazed on his shoulder. The 1st platoon had been allowed to "go on through" the Japanese into their positions and were taking up the fire fight when the remainder of the company cleared the cane field.

The platoons reported they were in position and had established contact with the units on their right and left by approximately thirty minutes after leaving the assembly area. The Company Commander moved forward and checked each platoon's position and after satisfying himself that the "gap" had been closed, sent his runner back to the Battalion Commander with this message: "Gap closed. Contact established with 'C' Company on the left, 'A' Company, 72nd Infantry (PA) on the right. Receiving small arms and mortar fire in front of my position. Japs crossing the river in front of the 72nd Infantry (PA). Thompson" (23)

At about 1630 the Battalion Commander visited "L" Company's forward CP saying he had relayed the message sent by the Company Commander to the Regimental Commander by telephone. The Regimental Commander had said it could not be possible the line was reestablished for, at that moment, there were elements of both "B" and "I" Companies going through his CP. He had ordered Col. Brady to personally check the situation. After a short reconnaissance of "L" Company's position and satisfying himself that the "breach" had been closed, Col. Brady left the CP. (24)

WITHDRAWAL AND REORGANIZATION

At about sundown, or about 1800, the Japanese artillery fire ceased. The Company Commander of "L" Company observed heavy concentrations of Japanese Infantry moving up along the enemy front lines. Increasing mortar

(23) Personal Knowledge; (24) Told to the author by Col. Brady after the action.

fire was noted. The Company Commander reported to the Battalion CP upon receiving orders about 22⁰⁰. When he returned from the Battalion CP at about 22⁴⁵ he had the warning order for a withdrawal.

The time set for the withdrawal was 01³⁰, 7 January 1942. The Regiment was to be the rear guard; "K" Company commanded by Capt. Max K. Talbott, who had remained in Battalion reserve, was designated as the 3rd Battalion's company to be employed as a part of the covering shell for the Regiment; "E" Company commanded by Capt. Robert Sauer was the other company of the Regiment in the covering shell. Intrucking was to take place about five kilometers to the rear on the main or east road near Hermosa (map 4)

The withdrawal of "L" Company was made without incident except that it was impossible for the men to carry all of their equipment and arms, due partly to the physical condition of the men. The ration had been reduced one-half around Christmas time and again another half the first of January, 1942. (See Chart I) Also, "B" Company in their withdrawal had left two heavy machine guns, several Browning automatic rifles, a light machine gun, packs, canteens and several hundreds of rounds of ammunition at their front line positions. This equipment, especially the machine guns, had been used to a great advantage by "L" Company in their restoring the main battle line. It was one of the deciding factors in the accomplishment of their (L Co.) mission. (25) These extra weapons and ammunition were only partially destroyed. All of the 60,000 rounds dumped in the Company areas on 5 January 1942 were left intact for the Japanese forces.

Although "L" Company disengaged from the enemy with little or no trouble, "E" Company, 31st Infantry (US) was almost completely destroyed. Only a handful of men, with the Company Commander, managed to survive. (26) The 26th Cavalry (PS) through a failure to decode the withdrawal order did

(25) Personal Knowledge; (26) Told to the author by Maj. Eugene Conrad while a P. W., November 1942; Monograph of Major Conrad

not withdraw with the other covering force units and were cut off, but managed to fight their way across country taking five days. The first units rejoined I Corps 9 January 1942. (27)

"L" Company's withdrawal was completed in an orderly, military manner due, primarily, to the outstanding performances of leadership and control by the platoon and squad leaders. This was completed and reorganization in process by 0700 hours, 7 January 1942.

Contact with the enemy was lost upon the completion of the withdrawal from Layac Junction. (28)

The 31st Infantry (US) was then ordered to prepare positions at Pandan) running from the Bay (Manila) to a point 1000 yards west of the main road. This position was to be the right flank of the second main battle position.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In making a study of this counterattack it is necessary, in my opinion, to think primarily of the defense.

First of all, I feel that from the very day the Japanese bombed the American Airfields (Nichols and Clark Fields) on 8 December 1941 the War Plan Orange #3 should have been put into immediate operation. It had been the ^{WAR} ~~was~~ plan since 1926, with subsequent changes, and to my knowledge was the plan used in all maneuvers and war games prior to 8 December 1941.)

The Philippine Army was only partially activated. Units which had been activated had upward to only six weeks' training prior to 8 December 1941. It is not conceivable by me that the Commander of USAFFE should have thought the Philippine Commonwealth Defense Plan could work after the first twenty-four hours of the war. However, it was not until 24 December 1941 that orders were issued for the adoption of War Plan Orange #3.

(27-28) A-1, p. 27

The two forces, Southern Luzon and Northern Luzon, were heavily engaged in battle with the Japanese forces in a series of delaying actions when the War Plan Orange #3 was put into effect and caused those forces much concern in getting their units across the Layac Junction bridge into Bataan. The "door" to Bataan was the bridge at Layac Junction and it had to be "closed" in order for the defense of Bataan to function properly. This fact was known by the higher commanders on 8 December 1941 but was apparently overlooked.

As to the action of "L" Company on 6-7 January 1942, I feel the Company as a whole carried out their assigned mission well. However, it must not be construed that I am taking the credit for I definitely am not. It was the non-commissioned officers who made this action a success. A great deal of credit must be given to the platoon and section leaders of "L" Company for their common-sense judgment, determination and complete control in leading their units into positions. The outstanding examples are 1st Sgt. John P. Flynn ("L" Company) and Sgt. Bragga ("I" Company).

The orders which I received from Col. Brady on the afternoon of 6 January 1942 for the counterattack were complete. However, Col. Brady's orders from Regiment were based on the assumption that the Japanese had attacked, which proves to me that either the Colonel's staff members or the two front line Battalion Commanders had not been keeping him informed of the situation; therefore, I did not know the true picture of the situation either. Communications were at a minimum, it is true, but orders were received and messages sent successfully by runner from Battalion to Company and from Company to Battalion throughout the whole action. Why couldn't the Regimental Commander have been kept informed also?

The reconnaissance taken on 5 January 1942 was, as always, a "must" in all actions, for, due to this reconnaissance I was able to move my Company

into position rapidly and with a minimum of casualties. Had Capt. Straud made a prior reconnaissance I am sure "I" Company would have gotten into the counterattack as an effective fighting unit rather than having his company disorganized and fleeing to the rear.

1st Sgt. Flynn's knowledge of the Filipino language and his understanding of the Filipino soldier, plus his own initiative and drive, spelled the difference between success and disaster. He single-handedly directed and lead the men of "A" Company, 72nd Infantry, 71st Division (PA) into their fight against the Japanese attempting to cross the river and penetrate our lines. Because of the inspired confidence he instilled in those Filipino soldiers they fought well, warding off the penetration by the Japanese.

Summarizing the results of the action by "L" Company, 31st Infantry (US) at Layac Junction:

1. From Battalion level down through the command to the squads coordination and control were good.
2. From Battalion through to Regiment very poor coordination and control ^{were} ~~was~~ apparent.
3. The platoons moved into positions with few casualties in an excellent military manner.
4. A great factor in the success of the counterattack can be attributed to the full use of all available armament and equipment left in position by "B" Company.
5. The enemy did not fully realize the situation and did not vigorously drive their attack once the "gap" was made in our defensive positions. (This lack of initiative on the part of the Japanese soldier was pronounced in all actions in which I participated.)
6. The withdrawal plans from the battle positions were not pre-planned, thus causing one Company of the 31st Infantry (US) ("E" Company) to become a casualty.

7. The 26th Cavalry (PS) were lost to the command for five days due to failure in decoding the withdrawal orders. It could have been avoided, however, if close liaison had been maintained between elements of the 31st Infantry (US) and the 26th Cavalry (PS).

LESSONS

The lessons to be learned from this action are:

1. Troops must have good leadership, not only from their officers but also from the non-commissioned officers, to be successful in battle.
2. A determined effort by every person in a command is a great factor in every operation in battle.
3. A commander must make continuous reconnaissance whether in the attack, defense, or withdrawal.
4. Control, complete and deliberate, is most necessary if a unit is to function properly.
5. High morale and Esprit de corps gives a unit the will to fight--poor morale will lower the effectiveness of a unit.
6. A commander must know the situation of his command at all times.
7. Coordination, control and good communications are absolutely necessary in all actions.
8. Destroy all ammunition and armament which cannot be carried in a withdrawal.
9. Do not "dump" supplies, especially ammunition and armament, in excess on a defensive position when it is known beforehand the defensive position is of a temporary nature.
10. Keep units on your right and left informed of the situation at all times.

11. Sustaining food, clothing and equipment are lending factors
to a good fighting unit.

12. Untrained and inexperienced troops can and will fight
effectively if given a leader.

13. Rumors can "build up" or "tear down" a unit's morale.

14. Individual initiative will come to the surface under stress
and strain of battle.

15. Once you have the advantage over your enemy make full use
of it by doubling your efforts.

16. For complete coordination and control a knowledge of your
ally's language is essential.

17. Withdrawal plans should be pre-planned and coordinated in
a covering force action.